

REMARKS

Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration of the application.

Claims 13-16 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. Section 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,868,498 to Katsikas in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,141,753 to Zhao et al. ("Zhao"). Applicant respectfully traverses the rejection on the basis that the combination of Katsikas and Zhao do not teach all the elements of claims 13-16. In particular, while Zhao teaches a digital watermark, Zhao does not teach "interrogating a database to determine what action should be taken with a message based at least in part upon the information in the watermark." Therefore, one of ordinary skill in the art would not have been led to modify Katsikas to employ a watermark.

One of ordinary skill in the art would not combine Katsikas and Zhao to make the claimed invention. Katsikas teaches a system for eliminating unwanted email by checking the sender email address of an incoming email against an authorized sender list. To make the claimed combination proposed by the Office, one would have to use Zhao's digital watermark to carry the sender email address in Katsikas, which is used to block unwanted email. It would be impractical and counterproductive for the sender email address to be embedded in a digital watermark according to Zhao teachings because hiding the sender email address in this fashion would prevent the email system from functioning.

Nevertheless, this rejection is moot because claims 13-16 are cancelled without prejudice. Applicant reserves the right to pursue these or similar claims in a continuation application.

Date: February 20, 2007

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Respectfully submitted,

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